

Vanilla Shake by orphan_account

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Summary:

Will needs to blow off some steam after another trip to Hawkins Lab, so he takes a thoughtful ride on his bike. Mike, though, is the last person he expects to see, armed with confessions and half a vanilla shake.

Vanilla Shake

Author's Note:

Will's inner monologue is ooc sorry :,Pc I just wanted to have a lot of fun writing this and kind of write him this way, was a nice break from my 20ch byeler fic coming up LUL

tumblr is hawkinzlab, come to send me prompts for these 2 or say hi, i dont bite!

Will was growing to *hate* being babied. He wasn't sure which was worse, the people in his daily life that pitied him without doing anything about it but crooning to him with plaintive tones of voice and forlorn eyes that Will knew how to read past by know, or the doctors who scooped him up like he wasn't strong enough to protect himself from the harrowing nightmares and visions that had ended *months* ago.

He'd come back from another visit to the the laboratory for a monthly check up and therapy session no less than an hour ago. This particular examination had run late and lasted half the day, all the while with being denied of those pitiful puppy eyes he hated receiving so much, instead being sat up in an uncomfortable chair talking to therapists and analysts for hours on end.

Now he was back again on the driveway, surrounded by the familiar shape of the trees crowding around his little shack of a house, with legs dangling over his bike; he'd snuck out after Joyce had driven them both home. Leaving through the bedroom window (without a notice left to his mother) was something he'd become accustomed to doing when he needed fresh air. The town is always much quieter at night, much darker, but not much scarier anymore. Will came out of the exorcism much less afraid of what could and could not take him in the night. Especially after nights like these when he came back from that lab, probably infested with God-knows-what horrors crawling around there still, and well, he always made it out of the place alive.

Will huffed through his mouth, watching the haze curl up in the air from the cold. When he went off like this it wasn't that he had a list of places to go, being furious and all, needing to blow off steam - he more often than not biked forward from the narrow driveway of the Byers house and ended up circling the school, or once in a while around the arcade, empty pockets as usual be damned. He'd never considered meeting with any of his friends when he went on joyrides of sorts like this; perhaps he pedaled toward their houses a few times for no more than a minute without making a sharp turn back around, but he certainly wasn't going to consider it now, no.

So he rides. He doesn't know where his legs are carrying him until he circles around a good portion of Hawkins, passing by the Henderson's house and later the general store. By the time he hits the diner, he figures he's been riding enough time for his legs to pop off. So he takes a stop.

The diner's open, with its neon light signs blinking, contrasting against the dark sky and shadowy trees, and beckoning him to enter (forget that he's no pocket money, and will probably settle on the barstool facing the jukebox for fifteen minutes before giving and riding back home). He rests his bike against a wall near its entrance, and shambles inside. There's the sound of dishes clinking and scraping, and the usual 8pm chatter of people, Will assumes them *nocturnal* - some adults and some seniors from the high school busied with their raucous laughter over sodas, he sees as he scans the room. And among these groups of people, his eyes stop on -

Mike.

Will is stunned at the image. Slouched in a booth by himself, there's Mike bent over a half-finished vanilla milkshake. Will takes it in: Mike's floppy hair hanging over his sharpened eyes, lips dripping with icecream jutting out from under the slope of his nose. His neck is chafed by the thick collar of a dark shirt layered under a cable knit sweater. He looks uptight. Not really happy, and it makes Will go quiet. Mike is the last person he's expected to see, really.

He's suddenly all the more aware, too, of the heavy and painful soreness tugging down at his legs when Mike dangerously casts a look upwards, sends it toward the window across the diner. A

minute of discomfort ensues on Will's end; he freezes up. A waitress making idle chatter with a woman on a barstool sends a glance his way. "You okay, love?"

Will thinks for a minute about booking it. Like he should have done when he'd rode out here, he should escape before he risks *Mike*, out of all people, seeing him disoriented at a diner, coming down from riding off his frustration. But he stiffly nods at the waitress. Allows himself to hobble forward.

When he slides into the booth and meets Mike's eyes, he doesn't know who's more surprised, Mike or Will himself. But despite the brooding look on Mike's face, Mike looks genuinely *happy* to see him.

Funny, Will thinks. *Well, that elates two of us.*

"Will, what are you doing here?" Mike's tone is excited, maybe incredulous. Will doesn't know for sure, but uses the neon lights around them to find the flicker in his rich eyes.

Suddenly Will's annoyance *vanishes* - after he's cycled around half of Hawkins to wind up here in the middle of the night with the boy he thinks he might have loved since he was thirteen, because *Mike* doesn't pledge that he's so utterly sorry that Will has to do so much as bend down when something drops from his hand. Mike doesn't silently pick Will up and sling him over his shoulder. Will thinks it's more than a coincidence at this point that they're here right now, suddenly. Call it a feverish idea from being in a too brightly-lit diner at the turning hours of the night.

"I went for a ride," he says, innocuous and modest. His eyes never leave Mike, not once, and Mike's scrutiny in return is so strong and powerful Will thinks he might die of it, or break out into a clean sweat. Knowing that it would be Mike upon him, Will probably wouldn't have a problem with either.

Mike scrunches up his brow. "Huh." If Mike notices that Will looks particularly mousy here, with his shoddy excuse of an ex-bowlcut all messed up by the wind and a good twenty-five minutes of vigorous riding, with Jonathan's old and oversized spring jacket practically hanging off his arms, he does a good job of not saying anything - just

curiously cocks his head. “Did you just come out here by yourself?”

Will’s eyes flicker down. Disarmed for only a moment. “Uh, yeah.” Mike brings his mouth to the straw. “What about you?” Will returns. He notes here how his voice is still nothing different of how it’d been in his middle school years. Still light and mild, childish. Right now, sitting four feet across from his best friend, he wishes it were anything but.

Mike pushes the shake to the side. Clears his throat. His face reverts to the same grim uneasiness Will had been met with when he’d walked in. Mike looks a little scattered right now, when he leans his elbows across the laminated tabletop.

“There’s something I need to tell you, Will.” Mike’s eyes dart around the diner, the group of boisterous teens filing out for another one to come stumbling in.

He inhales sharply - and Will can feel himself leaning into whatever he has to say, in the same way he can remember doing years and years ago when he’d been waiting suspensefully for Mike to announce the sudden obstacle of Orcus or Malcanthet in their D&D campaigns. Will finds himself hanging onto every breath. His past concerns gone.

Mike shudders. His voice is low, frightened. “I don’t want you to hate me for this, Will.” Will frowns, wants to promise him that he could never. Mike keeps talking, quickly.

“My dad, I - I let it slip somehow that I liked boys. So... I’m here, I left to get out of the house.” His voice is a little soft with something Will has no idea how to describe, like hurt or some kind of hollow vulnerability. Yet there’s a lack of release that follows. Mike’s answer is definitive, but it takes Will a solid minute.

Oh, Will thinks instead when it settles in.

Mike’s lip trembles, like he’s about to beg Will to say something.

Please don’t cry, Will thinks.

Mike puts his hand over Will’s hand. A shock might as well jolt through Will’s body.

“Am I bad, Will?” Mike chokes.

Well. This was not a conversation Will intended to have. And now he’s scared, daring to look upwards. Will doesn’t think he’s ever been more afraid, being forced to craft a response to this. Demogorgons and Mind Flayers could not make Will fear for his life more than Mike Wheeler in this moment.

“Mike,” he manages to spit out, firm. “You could *never* be bad. It’s not a bad thing, who you like, or... and however your dad reacted to you, it isn’t - it isn’t what you deserve.” He tries to sound fierce to Mike, the same fierceness his mother gave him when he’d told her he liked boys, too, but his mind is *racing* every second that he speaks: *Is this a bad time to tell Mike that I’m gay and have been in love with him since I opened my eyes two years ago to the fact that he didn’t treat me like a vase of blown glass? You know, one boy-lover to another?*

“That’s the thing,” Mike whispers. He’s tearing up. *Please don’t cry*, Will reminds him, hoping to reach him somewhere. Futilely. *You look like a very cute and very sad puppy when you cry and I might start crying and...*

“He didn’t even say anything to me,” Mike croaks. “He just looked at me, Will. And... and he, he walked away.”

“Mike,” Will goes gently. “How did you know that you’re...” This is where Will stops, swallows thickly. Mike’s eyes pleading him. *Gay*, he knows, isn’t the more precise thing to say. Mike had been devoted to El - Will’s sister - for an impressive month and a half after her return to Hawkins.

And Will, well. Will had probably been devoted to Mike since the moment Mike had approached him on the swingset at five years old. It makes him curious, and the words come out before he can think better of them. “How did you know that you liked boys?” he settles on at last.

Within the next second, he immediately knows - that was the wrong thing to say. Will blanches at Mike’s fallen face, and a nervous habit, Mike’s hand wraps around the soda glass. He looks scared, maybe even as scared as Will is right now, and scared isn’t really a look on

Mike that Will is used to, and that scares Will even more.

“Let’s go outside,” Mike says, after a sniff and a short cough into his arm. So Will awkwardly follows Mike shuffling out the door, leaving the scene behind them.

Behind the diner where he takes Will is a little expanse of gravel with overgrown plants sprouting out by the cracks of the ground. A few feet forward, and there’s a fenced-off area behind a chain link double-swing gate that nobody keeps locked. It looks like it was supposed to be an expansion of the parking lot. For now, it’s where Mike looks off into the distance, at the vacant field. Several yards ahead where it ends is a small enclosure of trees.

“Of course I missed El, you know, when she came back,” Mike mutters. “I loved her. I mean, I *love* her, still do.” Will remembers, and frankly, doesn’t need Mike to remind him so. Their love was so passionate and intense at thirteen it made him sick. The adjustment to it was painstakingly difficult, but as for the breakup - that he had never really questioned. Or saw it as an opportunity to make a move, for that matter.

“It wasn’t just that everything was too fast. I mean, it was. But I loved her, just... started to love her differently. And at that time, when I was supposed to love her, I kind of started to love...”

Will’s leaning in, heart hammering, probably going miles a minute. Here he is again, hanging on to Mike’s every word for Mike to only trail off, uncertain. He’s not with tears in his eyes anymore, having probably blinked them away in front of Will. The quietness that hangs over Mike’s words is still enough to make Will rattle with some sort of dangerous feeling. *Finish*, he begs, silently. *You can’t just start to say something like that and then stop.*

“What do you mean?” He tries to follow Mike’s line of vision, upwards to the horizon, towards the bright moon. It feels like Mike’s trying so hard not to look back at him. For a paralyzing moment, Will wonders if this was all just a ploy to get Will to confess that he was gay, too.

Mike shudders, breathes in deep. Will swears the air shifts a little, or

maybe it's his stomach lurching.

"I know you might not want to hear this. I'm sorry. But now that I can't go back home, I should just tell you the truth." Concern unravels on Will's face, where Mike looks like he's going to burst into tears for real this time. *Please don't cry please don't cry please don't cry.* Mike turns to face Will. And here, if possible, Will's heart rate speeds up even more when Mike solemnly wraps his fingers around the wire of the gate, but Mike's stare never escapes him.

"I figured out a few months ago that I liked you, Will, kind of like in the same way that I used to like El. Like - like the way that my sister likes your brother."

Will would *snort* at the mere mention of Jonathan and Nancy if his hands weren't shaking like all hell. He tries to reach out with one of them, a million things to say rushing through his brain, but Mike continues to blabber with his eyes pointedly cast down at his sneakers. "I know that it's wrong or you don't want me to but I promise, Will, I'll find a way to fix it, I didn't realize I liked boys until I had more than one reason to break up with El and it was kind of you but I didn't realize I liked you until later and it took me forever but I've known for a few months now, and actually when I first met her she kind of looked like a boy, but I liked her, but I also liked her *after* she didn't look like a boy and I know calling her that she looked like a boy is kinda mean but that's definitely *not* what I meant -"

Will clasps Mike's hands in his own, without ambivalence or a trace of hesitance. Mike looks so drained here, where he's never seemed so drained before, and it almost horrifies Will that it's because of *him*. But he's happy too, so happy, and he thinks for an exhilarating moment how he's so glad that he snuck out tonight. He watches as Mike's face experiences a mass of emotions the moment Will grabs for Mike's shoulders as hard as he can, standing on the tips of his toes trying to reach higher, and Mike leans down with what Will hopes is the same anticipation he's feeling.

Will doesn't know what he's doing the second their lips touch together, really, because he's never had much experience in the kissing department anyway. A few times with a girl from his History class that he thoroughly disliked, and even once with the girl that'd

asked him to dance at the Snow Ball in his eighth grade year once she'd found him again the start of freshman year. Both he can remember a feeble yet un-sorry lack of enjoyment in, but with Mike is a whole other world. Will finds himself trying to hang onto him for as long as he can, hands slipping from his shoulders to grasp at the material of his soft, thick sweater. He's surprised that Mike is almost shy when their lips first brush together, but then with a sudden force, Mike tugs him forward and wraps his arms around his middle. The pace of the kiss is far more intense than it was just a moment ago, and when Mike pulls at Will's lip with his own, warm breath over his mouth, Will instantly thinks that Mike is the best kisser he'll ever know at fifteen.

They break away, after what feels like forever and the shortest time all at once. Though they don't draw very far from each other when they do; instead Mike leans his forehead on Will's and they puff and pant each other's air together. They seem to grin at the same time, too, hopelessly staring at each other with Mike's seize on the back of Will's big corduroy jacket firm yet still not harsh at the same time, just as everything he can remember ever knowing about him, strong but gentle and fond.

And Will breaks out into a supply of little giggles, breathing onto Mike's lips and chin, because he can't believe what the night has led up to, and there's a lingering taste left in Will's mouth of icecream and another type of warm sweetness he would never know how to describe. Of all those times he had dreamed of kissing Mike Wheeler, he would still have never known the magnificence of it could have ever brought.

He reaches at his sides to grab Mike's hand again. Squeezes it tight enough to secure that this night is real, and leaning back in when it is, eager to indulge in the stupidly nice taste of Mike's lips and his vanilla milkshake again until he knows he'll have to go home.